

Re June 1955 Progress Report on
NSC 5408
Mr. Dulles

Copies of ~~Mr. Sprague's Report~~ and of
the Killian Report will be available to you
at Ritchie from the NSC Secretariat.

WAB.
SPRAGUE REPORT tabled.

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NSC BRIEFING NOTE

14 June 1955

PROGRESS REPORT ON CONTINENTAL DEFENSE

1. On Thursday, 9 June, representatives of Air, Army and Navy briefed the Planning Board on progress made in Continental Defense since November 1954. The most important points brought out were:

- a. Generally speaking, the effectiveness of Continental Defense is about the same as it was last November.
- b. A total Continental Defense system will not be operational until 1961 (when, according to Consultant Robert Sprague, the system may be obsolete).
- c. Through 1957 the NIKE will represent the only effective air defense against enemy planes flying over 45,000. (Note: Our intelligence gives Soviet bombers maximum capability of operating between 50,000 and 53,000 feet.)

2. Mr. Sprague will present his critique of Continental Defense progress to the NSC on 16 June. (See Red tab in your briefing book.)

- a. He will strongly urge much greater (possibly overriding)

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emphasis on the acceleration of Continental Defense programs to the point where the US will be secure against surprise attack by mid-1957.

b. Planning Board members appear to be in general agreement with the thrust of Mr. Sprague's report. However, some NSC members might query some points of emphasis.

(1) JCS and Defense Planning Board representatives were concerned that Continental Defense would be favored to the detriment of an offensive buildup. This is especially worrisome to the military if no increase in budget appropriations are contemplated.

(2) The Budget Bureau member pointed out that \$1 billion more had been allocated for CD this year over the year before and felt that this represented about all the "acceleration" from a budget point of view that was appropriate.

3. Mr. Sprague's general approach is somewhat deficient from an intelligence point of view since it does not take into account the

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prospect for obtaining strategic warning of an impending attack. This approach is apparently based entirely on the Killean report which discounts the value of strategic or intelligence warning. However, in NIE 11-6-55, "Probable Intelligence Warning of Soviet Attack on the US Through Mid-1958," we have estimated that under present circumstances an attempt by the USSR to attack the US would probably provide indicators which would permit intelligence to give a generalized type of warning - 15 to 30 days in the case of a maximum Soviet effort and several days in the case of a reduced scale of attack designed to achieve surprise. By 1958, however, assuming that a major Soviet effort had been made to prepare bases, there might be no generalized warning and a specific warning of an attack could be reduced to 12-18 hours. (Note: A summary of conclusions to NIE 11-6-55, "Probable Intelligence Warning of Soviet Attack on the US Through Mid-1958," is attached.)

4. From an intelligence point of view, there are several specific points in the Sprague report worthy of note:

a. The report incorporates the latest intelligence on

Soviet air capabilities from our most recent estimates. However,

new estimates of the range capabilities of the BISON and BEAR may increase the danger of an attack on the US without warning even before mid-1957 since these aircraft could be launched from interior Soviet bases. (para. 7 of Sprague Report)

b. We believe that Mr. Sprague overstates the probability that the USSR will test a multi-megaton weapon during 1955. (para. 4)

(Note: There may be an opportunity to make appropriate changes in this report at the Planning Board meeting on 15 June. If not, you will be provided with appropriate alternative wording for whatever use you may wish to make.)

6. General Bull makes the following comment with reference to Mr. Sprague's conclusion (para. 18):

"I agree that we will not with assurance be able to prevent large-scale surprise attack by mid-1957. However, the degree of warning in mid-1957 will depend, not only on our defenses, but also on the actual amount of strategic and tactical warning and the degree of dispersal of our retaliation power that will be possible

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at that time. I recognize that the improved speed and range of Soviet bombers reduces the period and likelihood of strategic and tactical warning, but I think Mr. Sprague overstates the point."

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ATTACHMENT: Summary of Conclusions to NIE 11-6-55, "Probable Intelligence Warning of Soviet Attack on the US through Mid-1958" Published 7 June 1955.

CONCLUSIONS

General

1. Soviet initiation of general war would almost certainly be preceded by heightened political tension. Soviet behavior in such period would not necessarily give specific intent to attack, but intelligence could probably give warning of Soviet increasing war readiness, including preparations to receive retaliatory blows and chart the trend toward a period of maximum danger. It is possible for USSR to bring about amelioration of crisis atmosphere as a deception move; intelligence, however, might be able to detect the continuation of specific military preparation which would be significant as evidence of a Soviet intention to achieve surprise.

All Forces

2. a. Full-Scale Attack: Would provide numerous military, economic, and political indications.
Generalized Warning: Might be 4-6 months, not less than 30 days.
More Specific Warning: Few hours to few days.

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- b. Less than Full-Scale: (i.e., emphasis against US and key overseas installations, and less than full-scale in Eurasia in order to gain some degree of surprise.)
- Warning of probability of attack could be given one week in advance, but might vary from few hours to 10 days, depending upon seasonal pattern of Soviet military activity.

Air Attacks

3. 1955 a. Maximum (950 bomber aircraft): 15-30 days generalized warning. 18-24 hours specific warning.*
- b. Surprise (450 aircraft, i.e., using forward base capacity after expending major effort): Several days general warning; 18-24 hours specific warning. (250 aircraft) might be launched with little or no general or specific warning.
- 1958 a. Maximum (1,310 aircraft): If major preparatory effort on forward bases in interim no generalized warning; 12-18 hours specific warning.
4. Both present and 1958, if movement to staging bases not discovered, warning depend on reconnaissance of staging areas, and warning

* Warning in hour terms defined as elapsed time between the receipt of information by a US command or agency having authority to alert US defenses which indicates threat of a possible imminent Soviet air attack, and the time such attack would reach the existing continental EW line (1955) and the proposed DEW line (1958).

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period might be reduced to a few hours, or even virtually to zero.

Methods of Air Attacks Providing No Specific Warning Prior to Launching

5. a. The USSR will have a progressively increasing capability during period for launching one-way attack on US from interior Soviet bases.
- b. Moreover, by 1958 (and possibly somewhat before) by
 - (1) Assuming development of forward base areas and by developing "normal" flight patterns around forward areas, could launch roughly number engaged in such "normal" activity;
 - (2) Assuming development of inflight refuelling launch heavy bombers on two-way mission from certain home bases, and without staging at the advance bases.

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